



April 1, 2010

The Honourable Ed Stelmach
Premier of Alberta
Office of the Premier
Room 307, Legislature Building
10800 - 97th Avenue
Edmonton AB T5K 2B6

Dear Premier:

It has been more than a year since Justice Peter Barley was mandated by your government to provide recommendations for making Alberta's farms healthier and safer workplaces. I do not have to remind you, Mr. Premier, that the inquiry was called after the death of agriculture worker Kevan Chandler who was killed at work on Father's Day, leaving behind a devastated widow and two small children. You may not be aware, however, that since Kevan's death on June 18, 2006, an additional 59 people have been killed on Alberta farms.

The hard but necessary question is how many of those deaths might have been prevented had your government acted on the Barley recommendations and joined most other provinces by legislating the health and safety rights of Alberta agriculture workers?

Mr. Premier, I commend you for assigning public money to badly needed farm safety programs, but they on their own are not enough. The experiences of other provinces clearly demonstrate that the most effective way to prevent injuries and deaths in the agriculture industry is to ensure basic protections under the law. Taking that fact into consideration, I once again strongly urge your government to join other Canadian jurisdictions by amending Alberta's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to include agriculture workers.

I must also say, Mr. Premier, that I have been made aware of a campaign by the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses (CFIB) called "The thin edge of the wedge?" Those of us who have long advocated for the basic human rights of agriculture workers are no stranger to the hyperbole of the corporate interest, but I find the messaging of this particular CFIB campaign especially callous and shockingly outmoded. Basic employment standards and health and safety rights are not a "union demand"; they are, in the 21st century, an essential part of any civilized society.

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I certainly hope the lobbying and public relations efforts of the CFIB are not a factor in your government's apparent reluctance to establish fundamental health and safety protections for the people who produce much of Alberta's food.

On behalf of 35,000-plus UFCW Canada members in Alberta, I can assure you that we will be working with our allies in the labour movement and civil society to use every resource at our disposal to fight for the basic health and safety rights of your constituents who work in the province's agriculture industry.

We all have an interest in creating safer farms, and I sincerely hope – for the memory of killed workers like Kevan Chandler and for the lives of current and future workers – that your government will do the right thing by immediately amending the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to include agriculture workers. Albertans need real leadership on this issue, Mr. Premier. It will save lives, and it must be done.

Yours sincerely,



Wayne E. Hanley
National President

WEH:VC/dj

cc: Lorna Chandler

Catherine Swift, Chairwoman, President and CEO – Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses

Gil McGowan, President – Alberta Federation of Labour

Ken Georgetti, President – Canadian Labour Congress